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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

No. 18 TORONTO August, 1942

ONTARIO SNAKES

Of the sixteen species of snakes found in Ontario, only the rattlesnakes are venomous, and even they aren't very dangerous. Mr. E.B.S. Logier of the Royal Ontario Museum says that he knows of no authentic record of anyone in Ontario having died of snake bite, at least in the last twenty years. The Museum's records indicate that two species of rattlesnakes are found in Ontario. One, the timber rattler, is known for certain only from the Niagara Glen. The other, the Massasauga, is found at several points along the eastern shore of Georgian Bay and in Bruce Peninsula. In addition it is occasionally found in the general vicinity of Lake Erie, usually in swamps and low ground, and in Prince Edward County.

VANITY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Personal appearance was as important to the ancient Egyptians as to ourselves. Like us, they improved on nature in many ways. Exhibits in the Royal Ontario Museum show that before 3000 B.C. the Egyptians shaved themselves with obsidian flakes (a variety of volcanic glass) and wore an eyepaint ground out of malachite (a green ore of copper). Displayed along with these primitive razors and the malachite cosmetic, are rubbing stones and slate palettes (for preparing the paint), beads, bracelets, and ivory combs. All these objects were made before 3000 B.C. An adjacent exhibit shows that considerable progress had been made in refining toilet articles during the subsequent thousand years:- Here there are a bronze razor of intricate design, a hair-curler (or more properly, a wig curler), a pair of tweezers, some beautiful stone jars for ointment, a modified form of eyepaint, and wooden sticks for applying the cosmetic. Bronze mirrors with gracefully decorated handles conjure up the rouged and elaborately coiffured reflections of their former owners.

SEE THE MUSEUM BY POSTCARD

Since you have been requested not to use your car, nor the railway, you may not be able to visit the Royal Ontario Museum. The Museum, however, may come to you - if you wish. It has issued a set of postcards with explanations based on material in the North American Indian gallery. Questions such as: Is an Eskimo an Indian? What was the fashionable house in Ontario? Who carved the totem-poles? - are answered in the set of fifty.

Open WEEK DAYS except MONDAY 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
SUNDAYS 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

QUARTZ DOES ITS BIT

Quartz is daily doing its bit to help win the war. A very versatile mineral, it ranges from ordinary white quartz to lovely semi-precious stones. Almost fifty varieties are on display in the Royal Ontario Museum.

Present in almost all of our rocks and concentrated in the form of sand on our beaches, its chief commercial use has been in the manufacture of glass. The variety, agate, is sometimes used as bearing in sensitive instruments.

With the development of communications, however, a new use has been found for quartz. Cut into small thin plates and polished, it has found its way into radio transmitters and long distance telephone equipment. In fact much of the advance made in the last ten years may be attributed to the introduction of this mineral. Its importance to us in the present war is tremendous. Most of our airplanes, ships and armoured vehicles are equipped with quartz-controlled radio, and their guidance and safety while in operation are in no small way dependant upon this equipment.

Although ordinary white quartz is the most common of minerals, the large transparent crystals suitable for use in radio and telephone equipment are rare, and at the present time almost all such materials must be imported from Brazil. The discovery of a good occurrence in Canada would be most welcome.

NO THIEVES HERE

It would make a good setting for the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. In a darkened basement room there are rows of huge earthenware jars. The words, however, on the outside do not suggest olive-oil, as in the story, but instead say boldly, "Coregonus," "Salmo," and "Leucichthys," and others more mysterious still. Tempted, we lift the lid and peek inside. Alack there are no thieves here but fish in preservative.

Yes, by now you may have guessed it. We have been looking into one of the storage rooms of the Royal Ontario Museum. Nearby we find rows of cupboards. We fling open the doors. Inside neat rows of labelled bottles. Some cupboards are filled with specimens of small fish, some with snakes and frogs; others, with divers worms, sponges and crabs. There are many more storage rooms containing other collections,--mammals, birds, insects, spiders and shells.

To the inevitable question--what is the use of all this?--we reply,--One of the chief jobs of the Royal Ontario Museum is to preserve objects for future reference. From this central idea radiates our more obvious functions of preparing exhibits, answering questions, lecturing, writing pamphlets and conducting research studies. Ali Baba couldn't do more!